Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and fifty-first plenary meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 8 March 2018, at 4.05 p.m.

President: Ms. Veronika Bard ..... (Sweden)

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The President: I call to order the 1451st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Dear colleagues, we entered the Swedish presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in a positive and optimistic spirit. The Conference had just adopted the decision contained in document CD/2119 on the establishment of subsidiary bodies to carry out substantive work. When I addressed you at the end of the first week of the Swedish presidency on 23 February to inform you about the state of play of the consultations on the appointment of the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies, I told you that we were close but not yet quite there. Today, on 8 March — International Women's Day — well into the third week of our presidency, I have to tell you we are not there yet. We are a bit closer, as I estimate that we now have four out of the five candidates for the role of coordinator that I believe would meet with the approval of the Conference. That is positive, but it is not enough to start work. We have to appoint all the coordinators in order to start the work of the subsidiary bodies. I feel obliged to remind you of the message I conveyed to the Conference last week: if we are serious about getting to work, we should start soon.

The subsidiary bodies need sufficient time to be able to perform their mandated tasks. Time is of the essence. We are working within a limited time frame of the session of the Conference. The more time we spend on procedure, the less time there will be for substantive work. The number of days actually available for the work of all the subsidiary bodies will depend on when they can start their work.

Dear colleagues, we are running out of time and running out of options. By saying that we are running out of options, I do not mean that there are not enough excellent candidates for coordinators among us. On the contrary, there are plenty — but it is my sense that not all of those I would like to propose would meet with the approval of all. It has all along been my intention to strictly follow the mandate established by the decision contained in document CD/2119, which, in its operative paragraph 2, states that the coordinators will be appointed by the Conference under the guidance of the President on the basis of equitable regional distribution. The decision is silent on the manner in which the guidance of the President would be executed, nor does it say that the regional groups would nominate candidates.

My reading is that presenting the candidates is the prerogative of the President within the limits of the mandate. I have chosen an open, inclusive and transparent way of consulting on this issue. Even though it was not possible to consult individually with all member States, all regional groups have been regularly updated through the presidential consultations.

On 23 February, I presented you with my understanding of the equitable, regional distribution: two coordinators from the Group of 21, two from the Western European and Others Group and one from the Eastern European Group. This did not meet with any objections. I have thus conducted my consultations based on that understanding. Despite all our efforts, we still are missing a candidate from one of the regional groups. Maybe it is time to take a different approach.

Colleagues, it is my firm intention to fulfil the mandate given to the President to guide the Conference towards the appointment of the coordinators. I still trust that it can be done on the basis of equitable, geographical distribution. I also trust that I will be able to present you with a list of candidates that will meet with the approval of the Conference.

I do not, however, exclude the possibility of presenting a list based on my prerogative as the President of the Conference. The rest would be up to the membership of the Conference. That would not be the optimal solution, but it may prove to be the only possible one. It would be a great disappointment if we failed in the seemingly easy task of starting the work of the subsidiary bodies. For the first time in many years the Conference would be able to carry out substantive work with visible results. That chance may not occur again any time soon. If we fail, the reputation of the Conference on Disarmament will suffer yet another blow. I appeal to you all to not let that happen. Let us continue in the positive and constructive spirit that led us to the decision of 16 February. Anything less would discredit the Conference on Disarmament.

With that, I now open the floor for comments. I do not see any delegation that would like to take the floor. Obviously, my message was crystal clear.

I recognize Ambassador Naziri of Iran.

Mr. Naziri Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran): Madam President, we do appreciate the hard work that you are carrying out. I think that your interpretation of the decision which has been taken is, of course, your own interpretation, and it might be shared by some others or might not. What is important is that a consensus should be the outcome of these deliberations. Iran is very much engaged to see that happen. So, I do not want to engage about the interpretation you might have; we might have different interpretations between us. A decision to appoint a coordinator on certain subsidiary bodies should be a deliberate act by everybody and a deliberate decision by the geographical groups. It is not enough for the groups just to be informed and then a decision to be taken. So, that is a different interpretation that one might have. What is important is that we engage with you and that a consensual outcome happen during these very important days, maybe under your presidency. So, we are waiting to see that happen. Please be assured that we need a little bit of time to see a consensual outcome, which is very important to be reached in these deliberations.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador, for your intervention and I take it that you support the presidency. Is there any other delegation that would like to take the floor? I recognize Ambassador Patriota of Brazil.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Madam President, I think your message was crystal clear and I agree with your interpretation, although I think it is not for us to negotiate interpretations as we seek to implement the decision that was taken. Of course, the coordinators will be named by a decision taken by this body, but it is not exactly a typical electoral process. We should not complicate the process and formalize it to the point of damaging prospects for moving forward and implementing a decision that has brought the Conference slightly back into the attention of the world.

We had the Secretary-General of the United Nations present — after quite a long time — to honour us with a speech on disarmament and a vision for disarmament and for the Conference on Disarmament. So, I think it is incumbent on us to keep the momentum of the decision that was taken and to make an effort, within your presidency, to try to solve the issue of these "nominations", let us say.

However, I was taking the floor on another issue. I do not know if we can jump to another subject, which is International Women's Day. It is very fortunate that we are meeting today under your presidency, through which the Conference pays tribute to International Women's Day. It has also been quite a momentous trend that, during your term as President, including during the Conference's high-level segment, we have witnessed a majority of women on the podium inside this chamber; and the trend continues. I think that is a fortunate and a happy synchronicity with the spirit of International Women's Day.

I would also just like to bring to the attention of the chamber a message that we have sent to the Hiroshima City Gender Equality Promotion Centre. This centre, in Hiroshima, is encouraging support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. I will not read out the full message, because it is quite lengthy, but I think it is important to highlight that it is the gender aspect of the Prohibition Treaty that has led to this acknowledgement of the Treaty by the Centre. One small paragraph, however, is worth reading out here in the Conference on Disarmament:

> It is worth noting that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons pays special attention to the gender effects of nuclear weapons, recognizing the disproportionate impact on women and girls, including as a result of ionizing radiation. The Ban Treaty also recognizes that the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men is an essential factor for the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security. Its signatories are therefore committed to supporting and strengthening the effective participation of women in nuclear disarmament.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador Patriota. I will now turn to the list of speakers and give the floor to the delegate of Australia.

Ms. Wood (Australia): Madam President, we thank you for all the work that you and your team are doing to identify coordinators, and we look forward to the next step of focusing on substance.

I welcome the words of my Brazilian colleague on International Women's Day. That is also my purpose for taking the floor today. I wanted to speak about the value-add of diversity in the Conference on Disarmament.

Gender equality is a key value and top foreign policy priority for Australia. International Women's Day is a chance to motivate our community to think, act and be more gender-inclusive. Gender-inclusive responses to global and regional challenges are necessary to support increased stability, security and prosperity.

Achieving gender equality is good policy. It is the smart — as well as the right — thing to aim for. Research has shown that more diverse teams are more innovative, take more sustainable decisions and are more effective in resolving impasses.

When I spoke in the Conference's opening segment, I said that we needed to value and promote diversity: diversity in our delegates and diversity in the countries active in this body. We need to create an enabling environment, an atmosphere where we are prepared to really listen to diverse voices.

Importantly, the pipeline of young people who will work on international security and disarmament is being created now. If we want good people in our field, they need to see that our forums are dynamic and creative, focused on solving real-world problems and building trust, where women and men contribute equally to making our world more secure and stable.

We particularly welcome the United Nations Secretary-General's commitment to gender equality.

Madam President, in keeping with the objectives of the women, peace and security agenda, General Assembly resolution 71/56 urges Member States to promote equal opportunities for women's representation in decision-making processes with regard to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. The Conference on Disarmament can do more to show leadership in gender equality, and I encourage all delegations to think actively about how they can contribute.

One positive example in our community is the Vienna-based Group of Friends for Women in Nuclear, established in June 2017 and co-chaired by Australia and Mexico. Twenty-three States have joined this Group which works in consultation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to identify practical initiatives to increase the representation of women in the IAEA secretariat.

There are other examples. Canada is doing terrific work to better connect the women, peace and security agenda, and Sweden is a well-known champion. I am personally encouraged by the commitment of the Conference on Disarmament delegations, and I offer some practical examples for how we can do this in our everyday work:

- We can make an effort to be more aware of the gender dimensions of the issues we work on. A gender lens is relevant to every aspect of international security.
- We can back diversity. We can be mentors to our colleagues and make this a forum where all delegates feel comfortable contributing. Not all of us are experts and we welcome the chance to learn from experienced colleagues.
- We can support more women contributing actively in the Conference on Disarmament. There are growing numbers of women in disarmament but fewer at senior levels. If you have more junior women on your delegations, find an opportunity for them to speak in the Conference. We need to grow our talent.

- When we are considering experts and participation on panels, it is not difficult to find qualified women. It takes a shift in thinking but our perspectives will be richer for having done so.

I wish all my colleagues a happy International Women's Day.

The President: I thank the representative of Australia for her good wishes and for her statement. Now, I give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Madam President, first of all, I would like to thank you for all the effort you are putting into this process. Secondly, I would also like to say a few words on International Women's Day, which is a global day on which we celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. We would like to reiterate that gender equality, gender consciousness and the empowerment of women is a priority for the Netherlands also in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

We are delighted to have you, Madam Ambassador, as our President, to be followed by Ambassador Dallafior of Switzerland, showing that more and more women are taking up leading positions in the field of disarmament. We acknowledge the importance of promoting gender parity and women's involvement across the different disarmament initiatives.

In the Chair's summary of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference last year, a specific paragraph was devoted to the participation of women in the field of disarmament. In the paragraph, States parties emphasized the importance of promoting the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men in the process of nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Moreover, States parties were encouraged to support actively the participation of female delegates in their own delegations, including through sponsorship programmes.

Madam President, the Netherlands believes that active leadership by women as well as their participation in decision-making are essential to create and maintain peace and stability. Hence, we remain very committed to implementing the various resolutions in this regard, for instance, United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and General Assembly resolution 71/56 — of the First Committee — on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. On the latter, the Netherlands, together with a group of member States, explicitly underlined the great value we attach to this resolution in a general statement.

The President: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement and for his support and trust in women as leaders.

Is there any other delegation that would like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. This, then, concludes our business for today. The date of the next plenary meeting of the Conference will be determined based on the outcome of the ongoing consultations. It will be duly announced by the secretariat.

The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.